

## Eat + Run

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# 7 Foods Nutritionists Wouldn't Eat as a Kid – But Wish They Did

Learn from the experts' regrets.



If you're not loading up on tomatoes, you're missing out.

By [Bonnie Taub-Dix](#) Oct. 9, 2014 | 7:00 a.m. EDT + More

As a [registered dietitian/nutritionist](#), most people assume I have perfect eating habits. I try my best to eat healthfully whenever possible, but my story didn't start out that way.

I didn't eat a vegetable until I was 17 years old. Yes, I had the occasional potato, and maybe I even ate a few carrots just to make my mom smile, but nothing green that came from the ground ever crossed my lips. I remember making a face that could have been captioned with the word "yuck" at the thought of just *tasting* a veggie.

And then something seemingly magical happened – in my last year of high school, my desire to shed my poor self image, [along with a few pounds](#), superseded my rejection of the plants on my plate. I welcomed vegetables to my table: broccoli, cauliflower, beets and Brussels sprouts had never tasted so good (especially since I never tasted them!). I learned to change my diet, which changed my life. (In fact, my nutrition-related epiphany drove me to major in dietetics.)

In recent conversations with colleagues, I learned that I was not alone. Apparently, the very foods we turned our noses at in the past have become staples in our kitchens today. Here are a few of the foods we turned from loathe to like:

**Tomatoes.** "I avoided them like the plague but wish I didn't. They're so delicious, especially in pasta dishes! I love cherry, plum or grape tomatoes in salads, or [sliced tomato on sandwiches](#) or on half a scooped whole-wheat bagel with nova and some veggie cream cheese.

Tomatoes are excellent sources of vitamin A (which supports healthy skin, vision and promotes immune health) and vitamin C (which works as an antioxidant to protect skin and body cells against damage from free radicals), and a good source of vitamin K (which helps blood clot) and potassium (a mineral that helps regulate fluid balance and muscle contractions). Cooked tomatoes are a great source of lycopene, an antioxidant compound, and carotenoid, which gives tomatoes their color and has been linked with lower risk of heart disease, cancer and macular degeneration." – *registered dietitian [Elisa Zied](#), author of "[Younger Next Week](#)"*

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**Crab cakes.** "I grew up in Maryland, where they're famous for their crabs and crab cakes. Unfortunately, as a child I did not like seafood of any kind. In the summertime at the beach, we'd go in large groups with friends and family to eat crabs – all messy with the mallets and bibs, and I'd order my boring grilled chicken. Today, I love seafood of all kinds. Crabs are also super nutritious – they're low in calories and packed with protein, and they provide vitamins C, B6 and B12, minerals such as calcium, potassium and zinc, and healthy omega-3 fats. Such a shame I missed out on the fun and nutritious experience of eating Maryland crabs as a kid." – *registered dietitian [Patricia Bannan](#), author of "[Eat Right When Time is Tight](#)"*

**Greek yogurt.** "I [eat a fair amount of Greek yogurt](#) these days, but it wasn't an option when I was a kid. Low-fat cottage cheese would have been – and still is – a great alternative. Like plain Greek yogurt, it doesn't have any added sugar and it packs plenty of protein (13 grams) to take

the edge off hunger. It's also really versatile. Pair it with melon or berries for a sweet snack, or serve it with tomatoes and cucumber for something savory. It's also handy at mealtime – I stuff it on a baked potato with steamed baby spinach for a quick dinner. I didn't eat much of it back then, but it would have been a smart snack or meal solution." – *registered dietitian Samantha B. Cassetty, nutrition director of [Luvo](#) frozen meals*

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**Cruciferous vegetables.** "When I was a kid, I refused anything cruciferous – broccoli, cauliflower, kale and Brussels sprouts smelled 'wrong' to me. It wasn't until college that I discovered their deliciousness. Now, I crave these veggies more than chocolate! I wish I ate them as a child because of their cancer prevention properties, especially derived from the compound sulforaphane within, and besides ... they truly could have made my meals more exciting." – *registered dietitian [Jackie Newgent](#), culinary nutritionist and author of "The With or Without Meat Cookbook"*

**Spinach.** "As a kid I hated spinach. I would pretend to chew it, but actually spit it out into my napkin and then throw it away. What was I thinking? Spinach is packed with vitamins and minerals, and it's known for its antioxidant and anti-cancer properties. I love it now as an adult but can't help thinking about all those years I was missing out." – *registered dietitian Keri Gans, author of "[The Small Change Diet](#)"*

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**Fish.** "I refused to eat fish because I thought it was gross and too fishy tasting. I wish I would have [had 'good' fish](#) as a child and not just been exposed to Mrs. Paul's fish sticks, which were my intro to fish for the first 16 years of my life. I was 25 before I gave it another chance! I wish I had eaten it growing up because it's one of the healthiest proteins." – *registered dietitian [Tara Gidus](#), co-host of "Emotional Mojo," national TV show*

**Mango.** "When I was a kid I loved chewy, fruity candies like gummy bears. Dried mango (naturally sweet and chewy) would have been a way healthier stand-in. Mangos are superfruits – bursting with antioxidants and more than 20 different vitamins and minerals. Tip: When I bought my first mango as an adult, I made the mistake of judging its ripeness by color, but now I know you have to feel your mango to see when it's ripe." – *registered dietitian Dawn Jackson Blatner, author of "[The Flexitarian Diet](#)"*

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Although it's essential to establish healthy eating habits early in life, if you're currently avoiding foods you know are good for you, invite a few of them to your lips. You might be surprised to find that they even taste good, too.



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